

CITY Visions

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CITY OF MORGAN HILL • JANUARY 2003

PREVENTING FIRES – A YEAR ROUND ACTIVITY

THE CROY fire last fall was a sobering reminder of the risk of fire in our region. Morgan Hill's setting, with mountains on either side of the valley and strong afternoon winds, makes our community especially vulnerable to serious fires.

There are many steps that we property owners can take to minimize fire risks. Some property owners have special responsibilities, as they are part of the Hazardous Vegetation Program run by the County. This program identifies properties with potentially dangerous weeds or brush that could allow fire to spread easily. Property owners in this program are responsible for trimming and clearing vegetation to safe standards, work that they may do themselves or pay the County to do.

Whether or not you are part of this program, there are many fire-safe landscaping recommendations that all property owners can use:

- Keep grasses and weeds below six inches for ten feet horizontally on both sides of all roadways;
- Clear flammable vegetation at least 30 feet around any structure. Ornamental vegetation should be kept clear of dead material. Slopes, and other conditions, may require up to 100 ft. of clearance;
- Keep property clear of combustible debris such as trash, wood and dead vegetation. Stacked firewood and neatly piled yard waste is not considered combustible debris.
- Keep vegetation cleared from under the eaves of houses;

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T H I S | ANSWERS ABOUT PROPOSED
I S S U E | CHANGES IN WATER RATES.
PAGE 3 • EDMUNDSON
RESERVOIR UPDATE.

CITY WORKS TO IMPROVE SERVICES

How can we better serve you?

THAT'S THE question we recently asked the City's development processing services customers - the residents, business owners, developers and builders who must go through City approval processes in order to expand or build new buildings or homes. Through surveys and interviews, we asked whether they had experienced problems or roadblocks, and how we could better meet their expectations.

The City regularly conducts similar studies. In this case, an outside firm was employed to ensure that we received the feedback we needed. The firm also compared our services to the "best practices" of well-regarded cities.

Thirty-nine recommendations were made in the study, and many have already been implemented. Over the next few months, we will continue to streamline our processes and work to provide better service in this area.

POTENTIAL WATER RATE CHANGE

CITY STAFF will be presenting proposed changes in water and sewer revenues to the City Council at a public hearing on January 22nd at 7:30 pm in the City Council Chambers. One outcome of this public hearing could result be a slight increase in water rates. The following will answer some questions you may have about this topic.

Background

After the City's new General Plan was completed, master plans for the City's water and sewer system were produced to ensure that the systems would support the community as envisioned in the General Plan. Once these utility master plans were completed, a water and sewer fund revenue requirement study was commissioned to further evaluate the City's utility accounts.

The study concluded that there was no need to change sewer rates at this time, but that some additional revenues will be needed to ensure that the water system has adequate financial resources. The study identifies three different options for increasing water fund revenues. These include:

1. Increase water rates by 2% in each of the years from 2002/03 through 2006/07;
2. Implement a one-time increase of 8% to water rates effective April 1, 2003;
3. Borrow \$2 million in the bond market in 2004/05, to finance capital related costs, and defer larger rate increases for several years.

Common Questions

Q When was the last time water and sewer rates were changed?

A The last change in water and sewer rates was in 1997 when water rates were slightly lowered and sewer rates were significantly reduced.

Q What do our water rates pay for?

A All payments received by the City for water are segregated into a separate account, the water fund, that is used exclusively to pay for the costs of pumping and delivering water.


Q Why is the City considering changes to water rates now?

A Operational costs to run the water system have increased over time and we have been told to continue to expect increases in what the City pays the Santa Clara Valley Water District to recharge the underground water supply. In addition, we are now constructing new reservoirs that will improve our system reliability, pressure, and efficiency.

Q I've lived in this community for years and have paid my water bill every month. Shouldn't new development be paying for the system improvements needed to serve new development?

A Yes and it does. All new development in the City pays a variety of different impact fees that are specifically calculated to ensure that new development pays for itself. The water connection fee is one of the most significant impact fees. These impact fees are also kept in separate accounts and can only be used to pay for the amount of infrastructure improvement that is attributable to new growth. Many projects, like the new reservoirs, are paid for with both impact fees and fees from existing water customers because they are designed to both serve new development and to improve the system enjoyed by those of us already here. Just as it would be unfair for existing customers to solely finance improvements needed to accommodate new growth, it would also be unfair and illegal to expect new development to solely finance improvements needed to serve existing customers.


Q What can I do to learn more?

A We welcome your participation at the public hearing on January 22nd on this topic. In addition, you may contact Finance Director Jack Dilles at 779-7237 with any questions about the process or the study. 

*Article by Jack Dilles, Director of Finance,
779-7221 or Dillesj@ch.morgan-hill.ca.gov*

"PREVENTION" FROM PAGE 1

- Trim tree branches to at least 10 feet from the chimney;
- Clear leaves, pine needles, and debris from roof and gutters;
- Special requirements apply to parcels of one acre or more.

If you have questions about the Hazardous Vegetation Program, or would like more information, please contact the County Fire Marshal's Office at 299-5765. 

Article by Melissa Dile, Assistant to the City Manager, 779-7271, Dilem@ch.morgan-hill.ca.gov

HIGH TECH RESERVOIR RISES IN THE WEST

COMING IN on-budget and on-schedule, the four-million-gallon new Edmundson Reservoir is now in construction. The Reservoir will incorporate a solar power system, a double ball expansion fitting for accommodating earthquake effects, a state-of-the-art water level reporting system, and its own built-in anti-corrosion system. Additionally, it will have built-in options that will allow future earthquake retrofits as new ideas and technology emerge in earthquake research. All this, while providing much needed storage for high demand periods, fire fighting, and back-up for the rest of the city's water production and delivery system.

Will Help Control Electricity Costs

The new tank will decrease the City's dependence on pumping wells during hot summer days. This management of electricity use (known as "peak load reduction") will save money on electricity. Since electrical costs for operating the City's overall water system are part of the monthly operations expense funded by monthly water service fees, every dollar saved helps in controlling the costs of operating a complex water delivery system.

Some Interesting Facts

Although referred to technically as a "reservoir," the structure is basically a 58-foot high tank with a diameter of 125 feet. It will be completed this spring at a \$1.4 million dollar cost, which is within the budget initially estimated for this project. Since this reservoir is needed to both serve new customers and provide additional security and service to existing customers, funding for this new reservoir is shared between impact fees (39%) and water user fee payments (61%) in proportion to the benefit realized and need determined for each group. Here's some additional information about the City's water system and this new structure:

- Average daily water consumption by Morgan Hill residents and businesses is 6.7 million gallons;
- Tank is constructed with approximately 325 tons of steel;
- Tank will get three coats of epoxy paint inside and out;
- Outside of the tank will be colored to blend into the surroundings as much as possible;
- Over 70 trees will be planted around or near the tank to blend with the natural landscape;
- Only solar power will be used in the operation of the reservoir's tank "telemetry" system (an electronic communication status reporting system that reports crucial information such as water levels);



*Above: The City's largest water reservoir.
Right: A view from inside the reservoir.*



- The anti-corrosion system uses "sacrificial anodes," so that instead of corroding the metal in the tank, an electrolysis process lets corrosion occur on the anode material - rather than on the metal of the tank itself.

Ongoing Energy Conservation Efforts

A grant application to the California Energy Commission is in process for this construction project, and could bring approximately \$100,000 in grant funding. The City's chances for this grant are strengthened by the reduction in energy use that the community can attain during peak hours in the peak load reduction period of 12:00Noon - 6:00PM. Grant funds for water construction projects like this one free up capital funds for other vital water system construction needs.



Article by Jay Jaso, Management Analyst, 776-7337 or jayj@pw.morgan-hill.ca.gov

"SERVICES" FROM PAGE 1

We welcome your thoughts on all of our services. If you see problems, or have been especially pleased by the service you have received, let us know. You may send a letter, give us a call at 779-7271, or provide feedback online at <http://www.morgan-hill.ca.gov/html/contact/inquiry.asp>. We'd be glad to hear from you.



Article by Melissa Dile, Assistant to the City Manager, 779-7271, Dilem@ch.morgan-hill.ca.gov

MORGAN HILL COMMUNITY GUIDE

CHANNEL 17 PROGRAMMING

CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

REGULAR SESSION:	1/15	7PM LIVE
	1/16	NOON REPLAY
	1/18	8PM REPLAY
	1/19	NOON REPLAY
REGULAR SESSION:	1/22	7PM LIVE
	1/23	NOON REPLAY
	1/25	8PM REPLAY
	1/26	NOON REPLAY

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS

REGULAR SESSION:	1/14	7PM LIVE
	1/15	NOON REPLAY
	1/18	NOON REPLAY
	1/19	8PM REPLAY
REGULAR SESSION:	1/28	7PM LIVE
	1/29	NOON REPLAY
	2/1	NOON REPLAY
	2/2	8PM REPLAY

FIRE SAFETY HOUR INSIDE & OUT 9:30AM & 4:30PM DAILY
7PM FRIDAY

FUGITIVE WATCH: 10:40AM & 5:40PM DAILY
SANTA CLARA COUNTY'S MOST WANTED 8:10PM FRIDAY

Did You Know?

Styrofoam is now recyclable. Styrofoam is a #6 plastic and is now recyclable. Small "foam peanuts" should be placed in a clear plastic bag in your recycling cart. For larger pieces, a bag is not necessary.



COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

NEW YEAR'S DAY • JANUARY 1ST

City offices closed. No recycling or garbage service. Wednesday customers will receive service on Thursday; Thursday customers will receive service on Friday; Friday customers will receive service on Saturday.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY • JANUARY 20TH

City offices closed. Regular recycling and garbage service.

CITY ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor Dennis Kennedy	779-7259
Mayor Pro Tempore Larry Carr	779-9622
Councilmember Hedy L. Chang	778-0511
Councilmember Greg Sellers	778-2370
Councilmember Steve Tate	779-6992
City Clerk Irma Torrez	779-7259
City Treasurer Michael Roorda	778-3653

CITY EXECUTIVE STAFF

City Manager J. Edward Tewes
City Attorney Helene L. Leichter
Assistant To The City Manager Melissa Stevenson Dile
Assistant To The City Manager Anthony Eulo
Business Assistance/Housing Services Director Garrett Toy
Community Development Director David Bischoff
Council Services and Records Manager Irma Torrez
Finance Director Jack Dilles
Human Resources Director Mary Kaye Fisher
Police Chief Gerald T. Galvin
Public Works Director Jim Ashcraft
Recreation and Community Services Manager Julie Spier

CONTACTING YOUR CITY

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8AM to 5PM
Address: 17555 Peak Avenue, Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Animal Control	776-7300
Building Inspection	779-7241
Business Assist. & Housing Services	776-7373
City Clerk	779-7259
City Manager	779-7271
Community & Cultural Center	782-0008
Environmental Programs	779-7247
Finance	779-7237
Fire Department (County Fire)	378-4010
Job Hotline	779-7276
Planning: Land Use / Zoning	779-7247
Police Administration	776-7315
Public Works	776-7337
Recreation & Community Services	782-0008
Water	779-7221
Volunteer Programs	779-7278
City Hall Fax Number	779-3117
City Website: http://www.morgan-hill.ca.gov	

CONTACT THE EDITOR

Questions or comments about City Visions are welcome.
Contact Editor Anthony Eulo at 779-7247 or environ@ch.morgan-hill.ca.gov. City Visions is published monthly by the City of Morgan Hill.

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